

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

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by

DANIEL C. MOLL, MAJ, USA  
B.S., United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 1990

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
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Name of Candidate: MAJ Daniel C. Moll

Thesis Title: U.S. Army Special Forces Training for the Global War on Terror

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chairman  
Bruce W. Menning, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Joseph G. Babb, M. A.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
MAJ William R.L. Coleman, Jr., B. A.

Accepted this 6th day of June 2003 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, by  
MAJ Dan Moll, 84 pages.

With USSOCOM assuming the role as supported command in the Global War on Terror, Army Special Forces will no doubt to play a primary role in that effort. The unspoken assumption seems to be that America's new, unconventional foe will best be combated with America's own unconventional warriors. It is unclear, however, if a force raised to conduct behind-the-lines operations against a large conventional enemy will remain the force of choice against al-Qaida and similar threats. This thesis' central research question is: Is US Army Special Forces adequately prepared, and trained to fight the Global War on Terror?

This thesis examines the contemporary operating environment, the threat represented by al-Qaida, and whether it represents a traditional terrorist threat or a new, transnational insurgency. A review of both types of organization over the last century indicates that al-Qaida is, at this stage, merely a terrorist organization, and not an insurgency. However, al-Qaida sprang from a region that is ripe for insurgency should the terrorists choose to become more than what they currently are. Combating the threat posed by al-Qaida, then, seems to require both an aggressive counter-terrorist campaign and a simultaneous pre-emptive counter-insurgency. A review of current training indicates that Special Forces appears well prepared for both efforts with one glaring deficiency: foreign language proficiency.

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## ACRONYMS

USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies,  
justice will be done.

President George W. Bush, Address to Congress and the Nation

President George Bush spoke these words following the attacks of 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Bush 2001, 1). One month after the attacks, the United States opened its campaign to remove the Taliban government that had harbored the planners and perpetrators. While the Afghan government crumbled far sooner than generally predicted, the operation failed to obliterate the al-Qaida terrorist organization behind these and other attacks. Realizing the United States would have to pursue terrorist enemies beyond Afghanistan, President Bush declared a War on Terror, vowing to fight it wherever necessary (Bush 2001, 1). To most observers, he seemed to mean al-Qaida especially, and any other terror groups operating with global reach.

Owing perhaps to the United States Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM's) major contributions in rapidly bringing down the Taliban, as well as the perception that US unconventional warriors may be best suited for the job, USSOCOM will soon become the supported combatant command in this effort. This evolving emphasis will put special operations forces (SOF) in general, and Army Special Forces (SF) in particular--organizations established during the Cold War to deal primarily with Cold War targets--in the forefront of the fight against terrorism. While US Special Operations Forces are arguably the best suited to deal with this threat, the new emphasis does not mean that these forces are as well prepared as they might be. SOF, especially Army SF, possess many attributes that make them better suited to fight this war than their conventional military counterparts. However, the assumption has been that these forces are now fully prepared to wage the War on Terror, and little attention has been devoted to additional and unique training they may require to ensure full preparation.

## Background

Today's Army Special Forces grew out of the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS) (Bohrer 2002, 73). Established early in the war to fill a void in the US military machine that mere military intelligence could not fill, the OSS employed a variety of intelligence and special operations operatives to collect sensitive information and harass the enemy behind his lines. Shut down at war's end, the OSS's missions were gradually transferred to two other post-war organizations: the Central Intelligence Agency and US Army Special Forces. Established in 1952 (Bohrer 2002, 74), Army Special Forces were originally to have operated in a Soviet-occupied Europe much as the OSS had operated in Axis-occupied areas during World War II. Organized in small, multi-functional, 12-man teams, the Operational Detachment--Alpha, or ODA was the building block of SF units. It was designed to provide all the skills required to equip, train, advise, and, if necessary, lead up to battalion-sized foreign resistance elements operating behind enemy lines, at great distance from US support. Seen by some as an ideal counter-guerrilla force, Army Special Forces went to Vietnam soon after their creation to help South Vietnam counter its Communist insurgency. This organizational and operational mold persisted for the rest of the Cold War. Special Forces' primary orientation was to assist friendly governments in defeating Communist supported insurgencies and, in the event of general war with the Soviet Union, to support movements resisting Soviet occupation. As the only standing special operations force for many years, Army Special Forces were expected to conduct direct action, or commando raids, and to engage in extremely long range, special reconnaissance. With the emergence of the international terrorist threat in the 1970s, Special Forces also seemed the ideal force for counter-terrorist operations. Special Forces today essentially comprise the same organization and training to discharge the same missions for which they had prepared throughout the Cold War (Cf. Skinner 2002, 19). Working with indigenous forces, they helped win impressive victories that ultimately overthrew the Taliban, and Special Forces now seem destined



to play a major role in almost all future actions in the War on Terror. This thesis examines what specific training an SF soldier will require to effectively wage that war.

### Overview

To determine whether Special Forces is ready to fight the War on Terror, this thesis will start by examining the operational environment and the threat. Having reviewed the nature of these factors, coverage will extend briefly to selected past strategies that have been successfully employed against similar threats. In a Special Forces perspective, the object will be to determine how these strategies might be adapted to the War on Terror. Next, Special Forces training will be reviewed to determine if that training adequately prepares the force to conduct appropriate operations now. If Special Forces is not ready, suggestions will outline the kinds of additional training Special Forces should conduct to better prepare for anti-terror and counter-terror missions.

Understanding the operational environment is a SOF imperative. Fully understanding all aspects of that environment--military, political, economic, informational, and cultural--is probably more important in the War on Terror than in any previous conflict. The environment will influence the enemy's strategy and tactics. It will also influence third parties not directly participating in the operations, and it should influence how the US conducts current and future operations against that enemy. Unlike the world of the Cold War, which was relatively predictable, the current environment is dynamic. The world population, which continues to grow at potentially unsustainable rates, is moving en masse to urban areas, many of which cannot support them. National governments have, in some cases, lost so much power it is questionable if they really control their countries. The line between insurgents and bandits, never completely clear, is growing more blurred. High-tech weapons, once the exclusive province of national militaries, regularly find their way into the hands of warlords and criminals. The world itself is interconnected as never before, so that political and economic decisions in one area can be

acutely felt in another. Culturally alien concepts arriving with new technology seem for some to threaten the very roots of cultural identity. Many of those who reject the West's capitalism and democratic ideals are often ideologically adrift in the vacuum left by the demise of communism.

The Middle East is especially significant for many reasons, not least of which is that it has become the source of many men who embody the current terrorist threat. Aggravating this schism, the United States is losing the information war. Censored by repressive, autocratic governments, Muslim Arabs are encouraged by the same governments to rail against Israel and the United States. It is hardly surprising that most Muslim Arabs are convinced the United States is more favorably disposed to the hated Israelis than themselves. While most Arabs are no longer old enough to remember their struggles for independence, the birth of Arab nationalism, or the Arab-Israeli Wars, they do remember the US entry into their holy land to attack a nation of fellow Muslim Arabs (Kaplan, 2000, 43). Arabs are also fully aware that the US provides more aid to Israel than any other country. Yet they somehow overlook the fact that Egypt is the second biggest benefactor of US aid (Shaefer 1999, 1), and the fact that the United States has fought two wars, Bosnia and Kosovo, on behalf of embattled Muslims. Understanding this subenvironment is as important as understanding the world in general, and this thesis attempts to capture the essence of both dimensions.

After having examined the operational environment, focus shifts to the enemy himself. The child of traditional Muslim resistance movements, the current threat witnessed its first flowering after the devastating Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (Wright 1985, 65). Strictly religious, the founders of this movement declared the West to be a force of moral decay and a direct threat to their way of life. Two decades later, disgusted by their own secular governments, which seemed subservient to the West, and flush with victory over a super-power in Afghanistan, now-unemployed Muslim fighters turned their attention to what they felt was afflicting their own countries. They concluded it was their own governments who depended on

the West, and most importantly the United States, for support. Initially ineffective at changing the regimes at home, they eventually fixed attention on the United States to either indirectly pressure their home governments or just to fight “the Great Satan.” Over time the attacks grew larger and bolder, culminating--to date--in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

President George W. Bush and most of the world have labeled these men terrorists. Unlike the marginalized extremists who populated terrorist organizations of the 1970s and 1980s, these men seem to have stronger support among their home populations. Despite condemnation from their governments, many Arabs seem to feel as much or even more sympathy for the hijackers and their aims than for the 9/11 attack victims (Doran 2002, 28-29). Viewing this popular sympathy within the context of terrorists’ stated goals of overthrowing their governments, one has to wonder whether these men are the same terrorists that we have come to know in the last thirty years, or if they really are the beginnings of a transnational insurgent movement. The distinction is important for this thesis, because it ultimately affects how the US will fight this threat. If the threat simply comprises terrorists in the old sense, beating them may simply involve identifying them and either legally or militarily neutralizing them. However, if they are insurgents, then the fight will involve not just neutralizing them, but also taking steps to isolate them from a sympathetic popular support base, all the while remaining aware of all the possible consequences of one’s own actions. This thesis will focus on the al-Qaida organization. Although not the US’s exclusive foe, it has proven the most determined, and to date the most deadly. Preliminary research also indicates that other threat organizations will resemble al-Qaida in ideology, support, structure, and operational tactics and strategies. Therefore, an understanding of al-Qaida provides adequate understanding of the threat the US faces in the War on Terror.

With a clearer understanding of the threat, effective strategies and tactics against this threat should become more apparent. Discussion within the Special Forces community has focused either on employing Special Forces much as they were employed in Afghanistan, or on

their role as “global scouts” for the new interim or Objective Force units. While these applications are certainly valid, they do not use Special Forces to their fullest potential. More than just highly trained commandos, US Army Special Forces is unlike any other special operations force in the world. Having a cultural awareness possessed by few others, and, in some cases training in areas that bridge the gap between special operations and intelligence, SF soldiers are instruments for moving the United States toward both conventional and unconventional full-spectrum dominance.

As previously stated, if al-Qaida is simply a manifestation of marginalized extremists unlikely to achieve their goals, the US will most likely deal with it as other terror threats were dealt with in the post-World War II era, albeit on a grander scale. The US will heighten its operational security posture, conduct an intensive intelligence campaign to identify the people involved, and then use either military or legal means to neutralize them. If, however, the threat consists not just of hard core, committed terrorists, but also a support base of large segments of a sympathetic population, then the response may have to include more than just identifying and neutralizing key personnel. Considerations may include keeping operations lower profile to protect friendly governments with potentially hostile populations and reducing potentially damaging media exposure of legitimate, but controversial operations. In these mission environments, Special Forces soldiers may conduct foreign internal defense, but out of uniform, operating in the guise of civilian contractors clandestinely assisting governments friendly to the US, but whose populations for the moment are hostile. Special Forces may work clandestinely with friendly segments of a population, the remainder of which, as well as their government, is hostile or at least uncooperative with US efforts. Special Forces soldiers may find themselves pursuing individuals of strategic importance, then unilaterally but clandestinely neutralizing them. Alternately, Special Forces may find itself assisting other government entities such as law enforcement agencies with tracking and arresting terror suspects, or even help sympathetic host

nation agencies doing the same thing. Special Forces may also unilaterally conduct operations typically conducted by host nation forces in unconventional war. Regardless of what missions Special Forces soldiers find themselves performing, a high probability remains that some missions will not be exactly what these soldiers have studied and trained for over the last twenty years. The important question, however, is whether existing training is sufficient to prepare them for these missions.

With its seven primary missions--Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Combating Terrorism (CT), Counter Proliferation (CP), and Information Operations (IO) (FM 3-05.20 2001 2-1)--today's Army Special Forces soldiers all receive basic UW training in their initial training, the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). The last third of that course focuses on a mission to assist a resistance force generally resembling World War II anti-Nazi resistance movements. Involving role-play and tactical play, the scenario is constantly updated to ensure realism. In many ways it lays the psychological foundation for each SF soldier that enables him to accomplish the many varied missions he will encounter. Unfortunately, the Q-Course may be the last time many SF soldiers receive this type of focused training. Within Special Forces Groups, most teams have two primary missions. One is FID, the essential tasks of which they perform every time they teach host nation personnel a new task. For most teams, the other mission is SR, DA, a combination of those two, CT, or UW (CP and IO are highly specialized, not performed by most Special Forces soldiers, and therefore, beyond the scope of this thesis). Though not a hard and fast rule, often the only teams that do UW-focused training are those with the UW mission; the other teams focus on their reconnaissance, DA, or CT missions. The implications are that only the UW teams receive specialized training in areas that would make them expert covert or clandestine operators.

Another critical area of training includes linguistic and cultural skills. Although much touted, the typical SF soldier's abilities in these areas often reflect both his chain of command

emphasis and regional orientation. While the former is usually supportive of language training, some notables in the past have de-emphasized it, believing that it detracted from the more battle-oriented skills. The bigger problem, however, lies with the languages themselves. The Army categorizes languages into four levels according to difficulty. The relatively easy Romance languages are Cat I (AR 611-6 1996, Figures Section). Slightly harder languages, such as German, are Cat II (AR 611-6 1996, Figures Section.). More difficult languages, including the Slavic family, Persian-Farsi, and Indonesian, are rated Cat III, and the most difficult, including Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic, are Cat VI (AR 611-6 1996, Figures Section). All Special Forces Soldiers must graduate from four to six months basic language training following the Q-Course; failure to do so means the soldier does not receive his green beret. The last fact is deceptive. Graduation requirements are not very stringent, and almost everyone graduates. Proficiency, however, is more reflective of language difficulty. Typically, the Cat I Spanish and French-oriented soldiers leave the language school conversant, while those who have studied Asian and Middle Eastern tongues are barely conversant, and unless a soldier spends a year at the Defense Language Institute, his language ability is unlikely to improve. Unfortunately, the languages of most of current US enemies are the ones in which SF soldiers find themselves least proficient. While neither Unconventional Warfare techniques nor linguistic abilities may be critical in the War on Terror, they are areas with vast potential for training improvement.

### Scope

This thesis reviews the current state of Special Forces training within the context of missions it may perform in the War on Terror. The thesis will review the world situation; examine al-Qaida and the terror threat; compare that threat with past threats to determine possible engagement strategies (although the objective is neither a comprehensive analysis of the threat, nor a thorough inventory of past counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency strategies); review where SF currently stands; and look at ways for it to better prepare to fight the War on Terror.

This thesis attempts to accomplish these tasks by introducing the proposition and reviewing literature in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 will describe the world environment, and Chapter 3 will examine the organization, techniques, support, and motivation of current US enemies. Analysis will also attempt to define the current “terrorist” threat as either primarily terrorist or insurgent, since defeating each requires a different approach. Chapter 4 will briefly examine past counter-terrorist and counter-insurgent strategies and draw general conclusions about the way Special Forces might be similarly employed to address the current threat. Finally, chapter 5 will examine the training SF soldiers currently receive to determine whether it is adequate for the possible missions they would be expected to conduct in the War on Terror. Brief recommendations to remedy deficiencies will follow.

#### Primary and Secondary Research Questions

The primary research question is: Is Special Forces adequately prepared and trained to fight the War on Terror?

The secondary research questions are:

1. From both a global and regional perspective, what is the nature of the environment in which the War on Terror will be conducted, and has this environment significantly changed from that of the Cold War?
2. What is the nature of the threat, and does it represent merely terrorists, or is it simply a larger manifestation of a terrorist group?
3. How have similar threats been defeated in the past?
4. How could successful past strategies be translated into present strategies?
5. Does Special Forces training prepare its soldiers to implement those strategies?
6. What changes in training are required to address deficiencies in required training?

### Assumptions

1. An abundance of material exists to describe the contemporary operating environment, as well as al-Qaida and similar organizations, and the threat they pose to the United States.
2. Sufficient information is available to describe the current status of Special Forces training.
3. A limited amount of information exists on past counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency techniques; however, sufficient data exist to draw significant conclusions.

### Literature Review

This study is a qualitative analysis of the terrorist threat facing the United States, strategies Special Forces can employ to engage that threat, and what Special Forces must do to better prepare for implementation of these strategies.

In describing the world environment, the primary treatment relies heavily on Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Friedman 2000), and Robert Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy* (Kaplan 2000). While both books provide a detailed analysis of the global environment, each affords a different perspective on that environment. Friedman not only emphasizes the far-reaching effects of global interconnectivity, but also discusses the underlying tensions between the old icons of cultural identity and the western culture that seems to threaten it. Kaplan looks at the same issues although through a different, perhaps gloomier lens. He frames his arguments in terms of resource scarcity, culture clash, and the transformation of war. Taken together, however, these commentators seem to capture the essence of the larger contemporary operational environment. For an understanding of the environment closer to the tactical level, this thesis refers to the Fort Leavenworth White Paper: Capturing the Operational Environment (White Paper 2000).

Primary sources for information about al-Qaida and related organizations at this point consist of both numerous articles written about it and Yossef Bodansky's *Bin Laden: The Man*



*Who Declared War on America* (Bodansky 1999). While ostensibly about bin Laden himself, the book is laced with insight about the inner workings of the al-Qaida organization. Additional sources include periodical articles and statements by bin Laden himself. With reference to terrorism and guerrilla war, this thesis relies on Gerard Chaliand's *Guerrilla Strategies* (Chaliand 1982) and Max Boot's *The Savage Wars of Peace* (Boot 2002). Chaliand's anthology discusses insurgencies, both successful and failed, while *The Savage Wars of Peace* discusses a successful twentieth century counter-insurgency campaign waged by the US in the Philippines. Finally, regarding the current state of Special Forces, the thesis relies on US Army Publications, Field Manuals, and articles concerning Special Forces training and Unconventional Warfare in journals such as *Special Warfare*. Where information is scarce, coverage is extended directly through personal interview.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Although there have been many changes since the end of the Cold War, the purpose of this study is not to review the volumes of information describing the contemporary operating environment. Instead, the purpose is to capture key elements of that environment as they relate to current and possible future Special Forces operations. Some changes, while not directly affecting Special Forces operations, will nevertheless impact the force in significant ways. This chapter focuses first on some general world trends, and later on trends applying specifically to the Middle East.

Changes in the world environment with the greatest potential impact on Special Forces operations include the effects of “globalization;” a growing sense of resentment of the United States as the world’s sole remaining superpower; the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of communism; weakening of the nation state; and urbanization. *New York Times* writer Thomas Friedman uses “globalization” as the paradigm that best describes the post-Cold War world (Friedman 2000, 7). As he sees it, “globalization” is the ever-increasing interconnectivity of all facets of life--cultural, technological, financial, political, and even military (Friedman 2000, 17-72). Friedman talks about the “democratization” of these areas, meaning that access to them is open to all. This “democratization” is the most salient feature of interconnectivity: it permeates to the individual level where one can freely communicate with--and therefore influence--just about anyone anywhere in the world. The implications are enormous. In addition to the capacity for news organizations to report events as they are happening, individuals now have the ability to use their own media such as cell phones and the internet to influence those reporting the news, those making decisions reacting to the news, and certain tailored target audiences. The speed of modern networked communications also means that everyone has the potential to react to events as soon as they happen. One side will always have the opportunity to “fire first” and gain information

dominance if its opponents are not similarly agile in their responses and initiatives. The US failure to counter Bin Laden press releases on Al-Jazeera television following the September 11th attacks offers an example of one side quickly gaining and exploiting information dominance. Deployed worldwide with an inherent ability to communicate to native populations, Special Forces may find themselves exerting influence of their own in the information area, and hence play a low-level, though nevertheless significant, role in any information campaign.

Telecommunications advances, although present for many years, continue to impact operational and strategic level decisions. However, in some cases efficient procedures have not kept pace. The US military has grown accustomed to the world press reporting everything to everyone, and has increased operational security precautions accordingly. However, despite technological advances, military communications too often flow through channels much the way they did in the World War II, transmitted and received through the same hierarchical stovepipes. Saddam Hussein may learn from CNN the minute a US force departs for the Arabian Gulf, but a US soldier with an enemy in his sights may wait hours for permission to fire as his request is processed through progressively higher layers of command structure. In an environment in which reaction time is critical, less cumbersome, more streamlined communications methods are critical to success on the future battlefield (White Paper 2000, 19).

At the tactical level, the US will encounter opponents equipped with cheap, reliable communications enabling them to quickly disseminate intelligence and to coordinate operations. The universal availability of cellular phones and small hand held radios range from state of the art Motorolas to inexpensive FRS radios (handheld VHF radios using common, unregulated frequencies). Although unsecure, these devices may be too numerous for existing signal intelligence assets to effectively monitor, and when combined with emerging commercial encryption technologies, the devices may be too hard to break to produce actionable intelligence.

Besides just communicating, however, both friend and foe now have the ability to obtain just about any weapon for which they are willing to pay (White Paper 2000, E). During the Cold War this principle was true in theory, although in fact one had to pay exorbitantly high prices to get many desired items. The fall of the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe saw many weapons on sale for bargain prices, with medium and heavy weapons available to all, and light weapons flooding the market. One glaring example is the ubiquitous RPG-7. While certainly not highly technical, it demonstrated just how formidable it could be by downing two special operations helicopters in Somalia in 1993. Recently hitting the world arms market, and still more deadly, is the new Russian RPO-A shoulder-fired rocket launcher which has a blast effect corresponding to an artillery shell (Worldwide Equipment Guide 2001, 1-19). The democratization of technology, however, has provided more than just rifles and rocket launchers. Besides communications, belligerents now have access to night vision devices, navigation aids such as handheld global positioning systems, intelligence collection devices, and special clothing and detectors to help fight in a chemical environment. Because of price drops, items are no longer confined to often shoddy Soviet Bloc equipment, but availability now extends to high quality, high-tech western items (Worldwide Equipment Guide 2001, 1-19).

While western technological advances will likely allow US forces to maintain a tactical edge for some time, the US is reaching the point at which advances no longer provide a decisive edge. Night vision devices are a case in point. Although the west continues to refine night vision capabilities, and these capabilities may one day allow soldiers to see with near daylight clarity, the night vision devices currently in the hands of potential adversaries provide more than adequate means for low-visibility fighting in most urban areas (Worldwide Equipment Guide 2001, 1-8.3). An enemy might not see the US soldier in color, but the soldier will be seen well enough to be targeted. The effect of this proliferation of military technology is that many technological advantages previously enjoyed and monopolized by US and western militaries will

be in possession of their adversaries. Consequently these militaries will have to look to other means to maintain the edge that their advanced technology once gave them. One other major tactical advantage provided by globalized communications is that an adversary, while lacking a particular weapon, may learn enough to develop effective counter measures to that weapon (White Paper 2000, E). The effect of common global access to sophisticated military hardware is a more technologically level playing field. The most immediate solution to this leveling is to maintain an edge in basic tactical proficiency.

Beyond the immediate military implications of globalization are its societal and economic effects. One of the many positive characteristics of “globalization” is significantly increased opportunity for economic advancement, an opportunity that is suddenly available to just about everyone. The result should be greater prosperity for all and a corresponding decrease in grievances that can be exploited to make war. However, a side effect of this availability is the diluting of central government power as regimes lose control over the lives of their citizens. Governments lose power in another way, too. As more authoritarian governments try to emulate the free-market economies, or gain still more credit for their debt-ridden countries, these governments interact more with the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. These entities, while providing recipes for greater prosperity, will suggest--some say demand--that governments implement certain policies as preconditions for credit. Although the WTO and IMF only recommend these policies, in fact, host governments must consent before policies are implemented (WTO n.d., 1; What is the IMF 2002, 1). Thus, these governments have no choice. To developed countries these actions seem like sensible cost cutting, budget-balancing measures, the same actions are often perceived abroad as callous indifference to the world’s poor nations and even subtle forms of imperialism, leaving some in the developing world wondering if “the oppression of unchecked commissars has been replaced by oppression of unregulated capitalists” (Friedman 2000, 206). The common people often resent these effects because their

standard of living gets worse, and the host government dislikes limits on freedom of economic action and measures that do not cultivate popularity with their people. One result may be increasing resentment against lending organizations and their most influential members, including the United States. Outsiders become scapegoats for pre-existing problems. It is quite possible a Special Forces team could find itself explaining not only controversial diplomatic or military policy, but also trying to build rapport among a populace suffering from economic decisions made half a world away.

The effects of this aspect of globalization potentially add more fuel to the fire of anti-American resentment burning around the world. The roots of this resentment are many and varied, ranging from the simple fact that, as the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world, the US is a natural target of both animosity and envy. The roots also grow from an “activist” foreign policy that not only seeks to look after US national interest, something most state actors comprehend, but also pursues many goals, including human rights and greater freedom for women. Complicating US policy and adding to the resentment is the fact that some policies are implemented in an arbitrary manner that suggests favoritism for some groups over others. Why did the US push so aggressively to stop Bosnian and Kosovar slaughter, and then do so little to address similar atrocities in Rwanda? Why, Arabs often ask, does the US press the Iraqi government on the grounds that it may have nuclear weapons, when it is fairly certain the Israelis already have many? Why, does the US denounce Saddam Hussein for his repression, but remain largely silent on what seems like Israeli apartheid against the Palestinians? Why does the US loudly proclaim its support for democratic movements everywhere, and then say nothing when the Algerian military nullifies national elections won by Islamist, or Islamic fundamentalist parties? Although perfectly logical explanations may exist, they are frequently under-reported or misunderstood, so that US credibility suffers. Special Forces team members, especially their

commanders, are frequently asked questions along these lines, and “I don’t know” does little to enhance either SF or US credibility.

Further complicating US foreign relations in the last two years are the current administration’s policies and frequent comments--pre-September 11th--indicating it participated with greater circumspection than its predecessor in the greater world community, and that the administration accepted decisions reached through a consensus of nations with the same circumspection. The decision not to honor the US part of the Kyoto Accords, the refusal to accept jurisdiction of the World Court, the dispatch of only a low-level delegation to the UN Conference on Racism, and statements that the US would soon withdraw its forces from NATO duties in Bosnia were hallmarks of an administration that seemed to desire less engagement on the foreign stage. Reasonable explanations existed for all these policy positions. Rather than clearly articulating these reasons and then pledging to “work with our friends to resolve our differences,” however, the US basically chose not to engage on these issues at all, thus reinforcing the view it thought it would do whatever it wanted whenever it wanted. The unilateral decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty--while trying to push others into supporting that decision--left many nations feeling that the US would not even honor its arms control agreements (Keron 2001, 1). These actions, coupled with US statements that it would pursue its ends regardless of world opinion, even that of traditional allies, all contributed to the belief that the US was at best insensitive and at worst a domineering hegemon (Keron 2001, 1; Daschle 2001, 1). Such were (or are) the “good” opinions of our allies, to say nothing of such less-than-completely friendly regimes as China and Russia. It is possible these perceptions may lead to greater alienation of the US within the world community (Keron 2001, 1).

Another factor contributing to the intensified scrutiny of the United States is the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Communism, once seen as both an alternative and even successor to Western-style capitalist democracy, represented a kind of

counter-balancing force to those in the world who thought the west, and especially the United States, was becoming too powerful. Some saw Communism as a possible alternative to the power of the west and an antidote to the problems of capitalism. Communism also afforded a point of comparison, if honestly considered. However, when the Soviet Union collapsed, this political and economic alternative to the west went with it. Most other states in the “communist bloc” could not rid themselves of the system quickly enough, and those such as China that retained it either diluted it on the slow trail toward capitalism, or numbered themselves among the few die-hard communist states such as Cuba and North Korea, hardly paragons for emulation. The collapse of Communist ideology and the political and economic systems it represented may lead to the perception that the west is now free to push its policies around the world with virtual impunity. Together with other perceptions, the failure of alternatives intensifies the belief that the US can go it alone for its own interest; this realization adds to frustration when dealing with the United States, and generally intensifies hostility toward the US and those implementing its policies.

While it is unlikely the US will evolve to pariah status, it is quite conceivable that “traditional” allies will be less helpful than might be expected as fellow members of a defense alliance such as NATO. The latest and strongest example of this effect is the joint German-Franco-Belgian declaration that they would not support Turkey if that country found itself attacked while supporting US operations against Iraq. Although it is tempting to remove some of these states from the list of US allies, it is better to understand current uncertainties may just reflect of the governments currently in power. France has historically been a better US ally when it has a left of center president. Jacques Chirac, its current president, lies farther to the right. With Germany the opposite has been true, and Berlin currently has the most left leaning government of the post war period.

Many threats will present themselves in the US war on terrorism, and each country will react to different US courses of action differently. As it pursues a particular course of action in



the War on Terror, the US will likely find other states in one of four categories. There will be countries with cooperative governments and generally sympathetic populations. Australia, and possibly the UK and some African countries fit this category. There are conceivably nations with uncooperative governments, but sympathetic populations. No salient examples fit this category, although a possibility is France. There are states in which the government and its security apparatus might be cooperative, while the general population remains either unsympathetic or hostile to US goals. Such governments, even if extremely authoritarian, are often still sensitive to popular sentiment, and may be more so as they support US policies. Countries in this category currently include Pakistan under President Musharaf and Saudi Arabia, among other Arab states, under its current regime. Finally, there are states that have uncooperative, unsympathetic, and even hostile governments and populations. Hussein's Iraq and probably Iran fit this category, as well as North Korea. While Special Forces must be prepared to operate in all these environments, the added sensitivities of the second and third type of environments require techniques beyond standard "in the field" tactical training.

Where Friedman sees a general improvement in the world situation, a second commentator, Robert Kaplan, sees the current situation drastically deteriorating outside the western world. He predicts a continued erosion of state power and the corresponding rise of powerful non-state actors (Kaplan 2000, 50-56). Although Friedman also acknowledges this trend, he sees it mostly as the natural result of the common people, often through business interactions, gaining more control of their own lives at the expense of their respective governments. Friedman still sees centralized state governments as portals through which individuals will interact with the rest of the world. In contrast with Friedman, Kaplan's dark world is one in which governments lose power to ever better equipped extra-governmental groups of quasi-governmental mafia organizations and disenfranchised political factions. Such groups may be a blend of both elements and are typified by the FARC in Columbia, founded initially for

political reasons, but now deep in the drug trade (McGraw 2000, 1). The militias and guerrillas currently afflicting western Africa also present themselves as political opponents of their home governments, but pay their way with what may be their first priority: locally mined diamonds (New Rules 2000, 1). Whatever the “ideology”--if such a word applies--the common denominator is that these groups siphon off power, money, and legitimacy from central governments to point that the central governments become irrelevant. The effects of this dissolution of central power range from the requirement to deal with multiple entities, including criminal sub-regimes, while operating in a chaotic environment in which no one completely governs. Special forces will have to operate in ever more complex and occasionally even incomprehensible environments that will thoroughly tax all their communication and diplomatic skills. This potential adds a new dimension to the expression “winning the G-chief.”

A major trend over which there is little disagreement is the increase in urban population, which is widely thought to exceed 60 percent of the world’s population by the early 21st Century (Urbanization and Migration 2001, 5). The increase in urbanization means that more, in fact most, of the future conflicts involving the US will most likely include an urban component. It is even possible that some future conflicts will see all combat conducted in urban, builtup areas. Because urban operations require more soldiers, involve a higher risk of both friendly and civilian casualties, and to some extent nullify the benefits of many technical reconnaissance systems, the US military prefers to shun operations in built up areas. Because there is little indication this trend will arrest or reverse itself, all units, especially Special Forces, must ensure their personnel are prepared to fight in this combat environment. Although certain Special Forces units, usually those teams specializing in direct action or hostage rescue missions, are well prepared to fight in an urban environment, the same is not necessarily true of the rest of the force. Army Special Operations Command has attempted to address this issue by directing Special Forces groups to run their teams through the Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat (SFAUC) training, training

the command feels will enhance both soldier survival and mission performance (SWC n.d., 1; SFAUC n.d.). However, teams specializing in Special Reconnaissance, Foreign Internal Defense, and Unconventional Warfare often conduct most of their training in rural areas, the areas in which battles have traditionally been fought. Their formal external evaluations most often take place at training centers in rural areas, so latitude remains for additional emphasis on urban training. Beyond pure fighting, however, lie other skills that must be developed in order to make the average SF soldier more comfortable and proficient in an urban environment.

Beyond these general trends, a closer look at the Middle East is warranted since all of the September 11th attackers and their apparent sponsors came from that region. From its glorious past to its present state, the Middle East has evolved into a region ruled by ineffective authoritarian governments preoccupied with their own survival, and faced, despite oil revenues, with a dismal economic outlook for its burgeoning population. This discontented region is a fertile breeding ground for extremists and revolutionaries. Considering its many problems, it is surprising the region has not been more violent.

As a prelude to further discussion of this volatile area, one must clarify terms frequently and incorrectly used interchangeably. The nouns and adjectives “Muslim,” “Arab,” and “Middle East” actually reflect different groups and regions. The “Middle East” is generally described as the region from Egypt east to Iran, and from Yemen north to Turkey, although some definitions include more and some less territory (Kjeilen b n.d., 1). The Middle East includes not only its majority Muslims, but also sizeable numbers of Christians and Jews, and it ethnically counts large numbers of Arabs, Persians (Iranians) and Turks, as well. Muslims, those who follow Islam, the third great monotheistic religion along with Judaism and Christianity, count among their major groups of adherents not only Arabs and Persians, but also certain Africans south of the Sahara, and Central Asians in areas of the former Soviet Union, millions in the Indian subcontinent, and the large population in the states of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Finally, Arabs are

generally considered to be those people who speak Arabic, have Arabic culture, and consider themselves Arabs (Lamb 1987, 12). Countries in which Arab culture is dominant range from Morocco east to Oman and from Sudan and Yemen north to Syria and Iraq, although historically Arab culture sprang from the heart of the Arabian Peninsula (Kjeilen a.n.d., 1).

Believing God revealed himself to Muhammad in 610 AD, Arab forces exploded out of Arabia onto the world stage in 634 AD (Goldschmidt 1988, 53). Conquering Syria, Palestine, and Egypt within a decade, their empire would extend from Spain to what is now western China within a century (Goldschmidt 1988, 55). Muslim Arabs today consider the next four hundred years as their “Golden Age,” when they were not only the dominant military power, but the world center of science and culture, as well (Goldschmidt 1988, 60). The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 left the Middle East in the hands of Western imperialist powers. Arab nationalism and the impulse to determine their own fate became central political issues for at least the next forty years. Despite eventual independence, however, most Arab states went from control of foreign bureaucrats to local autocrats or monarchs, who have remained in control ever since.

A developmental backwater at the end of the World War II, the Arab Middle East had only the Suez Canal and a few oil wells that seemed significant. The subsequent discovery of large petroleum reserves catapulted the region into prominence. Meanwhile, the West’s increasingly insatiable appetite for oil made it ever more dependent on the *nouveau riche* countries selling it. Their influence grew rapidly. Beyond oil, however, there was little economic or political development.

Although often seen through a Cold War prism in the west, one of the dominant ideologies in the years immediately following independence was Arab nationalism (Wright 1985, 65). Foremost in the minds of many Arabs, this concept involved scraping off the colonial residue, asserting themselves, and taking control of their countries and destinies. Overwhelmingly secular, indigenous nationalism saw the development of a homegrown Arab party and quasi

ideology, Ba'athism (a blend of socialism and Arab nationalism) (Kjeilen c n.d., 1), and the rise of perhaps the most popular leader in the modern Arab world, Egypt's President Nasser. Despite periodic set-backs and indicators of slow progress, people took stock of "victories" such as Nasser's survival in 1956 against the combined Anglo-French-Israeli assault and subsequent formation of the new United Arab Republic. Better times seemed on the way.

The unfortunate reality was that further political and economic developments were painfully slow, in some cases non-existent. Nasser often showed himself little more than a demagogue, long on talk, but short on concrete plans and action that would develop his country. Leaders in other Arab countries often were little better. Politically, the region generally split between monarchies and "republics," neither of which gave the common man much voice. One irony is that it was still possible for the common man to receive an audience with his king in some of the monarchies, while the "republics" soon adopted all the trappings of modern police states. Despite these sobering realities, however, the twenty years following World War II were generally filled with optimism in the Arab world (Goldschmidt 1988, 178).

Heady times came to an abrupt halt with disastrous defeat at the hands of the Israelis in the Six-Day War of 1967. Morale throughout the Arab plummeted. How, many asked, could a civilization that had once been both militarily powerful and intellectually brilliant have suffered such a total defeat? Feelings of uncertainty and impotence became widespread, with more Arabs questioning the developmental paths chosen by their countries. The general sentiment was that the Jewish Israelis had prevailed by being true to their faith, while Muslim Arabs had failed because they had strayed from theirs (Wright 1985, 66). Examining the situation, many Muslim Arabs turned to Islam for solace, an emphasis plainly visible when attacking Egyptian soldiers chanted *Allahu Akhbar* (God is great) during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (Wright 1985, 65). Soul-searching illuminated other deficiencies in the Arab world, few of which had undergone marked improvement in the intervening years.

By the end of the 20th Century, many Arabs detected little improvement in either their economic or political lives since 1967. Economic disparities between rich and poor Arab states became more pronounced as conditions within the Arab countries with no oil reserves have only marginally improved or even deteriorated. Oil wealth has remained in the oil producing countries in the Arabian Gulf. There, the rulers vastly improved the lot of their own tiny societies, but despite frequent declarations of Arab solidarity, did little to spread wealth beyond their borders. Although there have been some attempts at diversification within those oil countries, their economies remain overwhelmingly petroleum-based (CIA Factbook 2002, 1). By contrast, those outside the oil-rich Gulf, most notably Egypt with its large population, remained poor. Inefficient, centrally managed economies, never strong to begin with, became progressively less able to cope with skyrocketing populations that have more than doubled in the last fifty years and continue their explosive growth (Fergany 2002, 35). Aggravating this fact is an education deficit currently fed by 10 million school-age children out of school with no promise of improvement (Fergany 2002, 4). Low levels of economic investment and development have further exacerbated the situation. Foreign assistance is rarely felt by the public (CIA Factbook 2000). Those countries with little or no oil, while in some cases statistically improving, have become for the average citizen increasingly destitute. In some countries, population growth has outpaced economic growth with a resulting decline in per capita GDP and a corresponding drop in standards of living (Fergany 2002, 5). With a current average unemployment rate of 15 percent across the Arab world (Fergany 2002, 4), the ongoing population explosion will only make the situation more volatile. For Arab countries producing little or no oil--and possessing most of the Arab population--the economic outlook is very bleak.

Politically, although the faces have changed, the regimes that came to power following independence have clung to power. Far removed from the optimistic, idealistic visions of their predecessors, their primary purpose today is perpetuating their own power. Alarmed by

increasingly restive and economically desperate populations, many Arab regimes realize that they cannot win a fair election. In terms of classic indicators, the entire Middle East is an insurgency waiting to happen. To prevent this, all regimes, whether republican or royal, have clamped down on the political process to the point that most elections are a sham. Fearing true freedom of speech for what such freedom might incite, Arab governments have placed severe limits on what they will tolerate being said or written in public. All criticism of the government and its policies, whether direct or indirect, is an invitation for an interview with the security services. Realizing, however, that their people need some form of pressure release, regimes allow an outlet for frustration with officially sanctioned targets of denunciation. As one Egyptian official stated, “If the people are thinking about the Palestinians, they are not thinking about [their own miserable plight]” (Goldberg 2001, 55). Chief among recipients of this vitriol is Israel. The US holds second place.

More than any other question, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has both inflamed and to some extent unified public opinion across the Arab world. Recent polls of Arabs living in the Middle East found that chief among their concerns was civil and personal rights, followed by the economic situation, and then “Palestine” (Zogby 2002, 1). Though the first two issues are understandable, the third can seem puzzling. How, one asks, does a well-to-do Saudi or a poverty stricken Egyptian far removed from the situation place the Palestinian issue just behind the other two?

The answer is twofold. First, most Arabs feel intense loyalties to their immediate and extended families (Nydell 1987, 75). Following closely behind are remote extended families, clans, and further extensions, tribes. Far from one’s immediate family, but family nonetheless, are all peoples calling themselves Arabs. So, unlike westerners, whose concept of “family” is a nuclear or even extended family, the Arab concept of “family” can be quite large, transcending western notions of nationality. The result on the larger political scene is emotional attachment to

Palestinian Arabs. In effect, the Saudi, Egyptian, Omani, or Syrian feels the same about the Israelis “beating up on” Palestinians as a westerner would feel about an outsider beating up on his brother. This feeling extends beyond the Arab Middle East to all countries with Muslim cultures, because Islam bears the heavy imprint of the Arab culture that first introduced it to the world. Part of that culture is encouragement for the feeling of kinship among all Muslims. This feeling helps explain intense expressions of sympathy for Palestinians from countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nigeria.

The second reason Israel remains in the forefront of Arab discourse is that many perceive the Israeli state as a perpetual slap in the face of the collective Arab nation. Israel’s very presence is seen as a humiliating sign of Arab impotence in the world, a massive loss of face in a culture in which standing and stature count for everything. In fact, some Arabs view the creation of Israel as the single greatest disaster experienced by Arabs since the Middle Ages, even going so far as to call it their “holocaust” (Bodansky 1999, 15).

Thus Israel is a natural and politically safe target for frustrations that may have had little to do with the Arab-Israeli situation. The worse conditions become, the more shrill the invective against the only common acceptable common target (Goldberg a 2001, 55). Recent years have seen the United States become another acceptable target (Goldberg a 2001, 55). This evolution results both from strong US support for Israel--without whose aid, many believe the tiny country would collapse--and since 1991, the constant bombing and sanctions against Iraq. While designed to punish Saddam Hussein, most Arabs feel that the Iraqi people are the real victims of this policy. Taken together, both policies have done much to degrade US credibility in the region.

In a still more difficult position than those countries diverting popular attention from domestic economic and political concerns is the government of Saudi Arabia. Its oil wealth should make for a relatively content population, but periodically declining oil revenues have inflicted economic pain. More importantly, however, is the Saudi role as custodian of Islam’s



birthplace. This role subjects the regime to even harsher standards. The custodian of the holy sites should, some dissidents feel, be better, less hypocritical, and more Islamic than other regimes (Mujahid 1996, 3-7). Unfortunately for the Saudi monarchy, many of its citizens feel that Riyadh applies its laws inconsistently, with the ruling class often exempt (Mujahid 1996, 3-7). The kingdom's officially sanctioned Wahhabi brand of conservative Islam only reinforces this belief. The greatest crime, however, is that the Saudi government allowed foreign, non-Muslim soldiers into the country in order to defeat a fellow Arab and Muslim state (Mujahid 1996, 4). Worse, the monarchy allows these forces to remain. The US presence in Saudi Arabia has been a rallying point for anti-government dissidents since the arrival of US forces. Just as in other Arab countries, the Saudi regime attempts to deflect criticism from itself by channeling it to Israel, and, often enough, to the United States. This technique of deflecting criticism to other targets has brought citizens of the two most influential countries in the region to criticize their nominal ally, the United States. The hatred and animosity engendered by such criticism may also have led some to cross the line from angry words to angry terrorist deeds.

Criticism has also led to greater scrutiny of the United States in the region. Once seen as a fairly impartial broker, it is now viewed in the best light as leaning strongly toward Israel (Zogby 2002, 1). Stronger condemnation comes from those who feel the path to progress and even glory lies on the path to Islam. Formerly referred to as Muslim fundamentalists, advocates of returning to a supposedly purer form of Islam as taught by the prophet Muhammad are now commonly called Islamists. Their creed holds that Islam is not only a religion, but also a political and social alternative to other failed ideologies (Kjeilen d n.d., 1). Thus, an ideological vacuum is filled, at least for those raised in Islamic culture. The problems the Islamists see in their own countries are a direct result of their governments' emulation of the practices and policies of the west, a west that brings more problems than solutions. In addition to the west's demonstrated failures in their countries is a perception that the west's unwanted cultural baggage seems to

subvert native cultures. Friedman points out in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* that future conflicts may revolve around a traditional culture feeling it is being swept away by an encroaching alien modern culture (Friedman 2000, 74). Nowhere is that feeling stronger than in the Middle East, and the alien culture belongs to the west. The foremost representative of all that is bad in the west is the United States, “a collection of casinos, super-markets, and whore-houses linked together by a superhighway going nowhere” (Bodansky 1999, 8). Besides polluting Islamic and Arab culture, the west props up authoritarian regimes that perpetuate the misery of their people. They believe these two factors, the intrusions of the still imperialistic west and their own corrupt governments, are the root of all problems in not just the Arab but the entire Muslim world.

As antidote, the Islamists prescribe a solution for the Muslim world: a return to Islam (Kjeilen d n.d., 1). In direct contrast with beliefs that have become axiomatic in the west, Muslims do not believe in separation of church and state. On the contrary, they believe the Quran and the example of Muhammad show that religion and politics can and should be combined. An oft-heard statement is, “the Quran is our constitution.” Translated into practical terms, this assertion means that current regimes in Arab, indeed all Muslim countries, should be replaced by truly Islamic regimes which implement the *Shari’a*, or Islamic law (Kepel 2002, 23). Such regimes would run the governments as Muhammad and his immediate successors ran theirs. Combined with modern technology, they feel this turn of events would usher in a new “Golden Age” (Kjeilen d n.d., 1). Although glaringly short of specifics for solving modern problems and seeming downright utopian, these ideas are nevertheless very attractive to many Muslims. These ideas offer, in effect, an ideology to compete with the democratic capitalism of the west, and they fill the vacuum left by communism. Unlike communism, however, this ideology possesses the added strength of religious appeal. While Islamism attracts those from all parts of Arab society, many of the current followers are young, educated, aspiring professionals. Although their parents might be rural, a new generation has recently come to the cities in search of greater opportunities

(Kjeilen d n.d., 1). Poor economies, however, mean fewer opportunities, and the result is that many do not find the employment they seek, or even any work at all. As the economically disenfranchised ponder their situation, the call of the Islamists can be quite alluring. Given the political and economic situation in the Middle East, it is very likely there are many sympathizers and more than a few converts to this new ideology.

For the most part these factors will probably not directly affect Special Forces operating in the Middle East. However, these factors set the stage for developments that will directly impact US SF soldiers. As one of the US Army's assets most in tune with local cultures, Special Forces soldiers must for their own safety and mission accomplishment remain attuned to the region. However, Special Forces soldiers operating in large areas of the Middle East realize they are, at this moment, the proverbial fish out of water. Considerable work remains to win indigenous hearts and minds in this complex part of the world where many increasingly seek to redress social, economic, and perceived military weakness with terrorism.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE THREAT

President Bush originally called the War on Terror a fight against terror wherever it was found, suggesting that the US might eventually confront all terrorist groups. Much to the disappointment of countries such as India and Israel, however, most US efforts thus far suggest the primary targets will be those groups thought to pose a direct threat to US interests. Foremost among them is al-Qaida and its founder, Usama bin Laden. Possessing will, ability, and a proven record, these architects of attacks against US embassies, a warship, the Pentagon, and the World Trade Center have twice earned the title of US public enemy number one.

The background and goals of bin Laden and al-Qaida make the broader threat initially seem like Islam, or at least the Arab face of Islam. If reluctant cooperation and frequent denunciations by US “allies” and frequent high profile hostage takings in the 1980’s did not leave an observer feeling that Islam was an enemy of the US, scenes of Palestinians--most of them Muslim--dancing in the streets following the September 11th attacks would seem to leave little doubt. Indeed, Islamic fundamentalism, or Islamism, may be the ideological base of the primary terrorist threat faced by the United States. However, Islam, and even Islamism by itself, are not *the* threat. While many who share Islamist beliefs are undoubtedly sympathetic to bin Laden, many also disagree with him over the desired end state. Bin Laden and those who share his goals would undoubtedly like to capitalize on Arab and Muslim discontent. While some would label him a revolutionary leader, bin Laden and the al-Qaida organization have so far eschewed the political objectives that would make them true revolutionaries. They seem for the moment to be content to confine themselves to terrorist attacks.

What then is the nature of bin Laden and al-Qaida and the threat they pose? The answer lies with an examination of both bin Laden the man, and the organization he is credited for creating: al-Qaida. In some cases in which the two are used interchangeably, this crossover occurs

because bin Laden as founding member and most visible spokesman accurately represents the organization. To that extent, when discussing goals, policies, and tactics, bin Laden is synonymous with his organization.

Born in Riyadh in 1957 (Mujahid 1996, 2), the seventeenth son of an enormously wealthy building contractor and Yemeni immigrant to Saudi Arabia, Usama bin Laden studied management and economics at King Abdul Azziz University in Jedda, Saudi Arabia (Osama 2000, 1). His siblings note that bin Laden's religious zeal was prominent at an early age (Osama 2000, 1). It is unclear whether the boy's strong religious conviction stemmed from his father's death at an early age or the family's work rebuilding the mosques in both Mecca and Medina. The Islamic atmosphere at King Abdul Azziz University seems to have reinforced bin Laden's religious conviction, especially after his meeting with Sheik Abdullah Azzam, who introduced him to "the intertwined worlds of Arab politics and religion" (Osama 2000, 1). A leader of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 2), Azzam was a proponent of Jihad--in this case holy war--as struggle against the Israelis (Azzam n.d., 1). He may have sewn in his pupil the seeds of fervor for divinely sanctioned struggle against Islam's enemies. Whatever the source of inspirational belief, bin Laden apparently began interacting with Islamic groups by 1973. By the early 1980s, he was participating with insurgents fighting the communist government of South Yemen (Mujahid 1996, 1).

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, bin Laden established Ma'sadat al-Anssar, a base for Arab Mujahideen in Afghanistan (Mujahid 1996, 1) and MAK (Maktab al-Khidamat), or Services Office, to provide fighters and resources to the Afghan resistance (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 2). With offices all over the world, including the US, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, MAK enlisted, cared for, and transported thousands of would-be mujahideen from their home countries to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 2). Developing a reputation as an honest and respectful man, he initially provided logistical support for the Afghan resistance and

enhanced its infrastructure, even putting to use his contractor background by building roads and reinforcing tunnel hideouts (Osama 2000, 1). Later he participated with Arab mujahideen in both the 1986 and 1989 battles of Jalalabad (Mujahid 1996, 2). These fights enhanced his reputation. According to a Palestinian mujahideen,

He was a hero to us because he was always on the front line, always moving head of everyone else... he not only gave his money, he gave himself. He came down from his palace to live with the Afghan peasants and Arab fighters. He cooked with them, ate with them, dug trenches with them. That was bin Laden's way. (Bodansky 1999, 19)

The second battle of Jalalabad, which pitted the mujahideen against the still communist Afghan army, went badly for the mujahideen, and they were decimated. Subsequently, Sheik Azzam and others apparently concluded that they had been victims of a US conspiracy implemented by the Pakistani Intelligence Agency, ISI (Bodansky 1999, 26). The reasoning was that the US felt threatened by ascendant Islam, and that the ISI wanted to rid themselves of an element over which it had insufficient control (Bodansky 1999, 27). Azzam, who now began loudly advocating international Jihad, was killed by a car bomb in 1989 (Bodansky 1999, 28).

After the Afghan war and his return to Saudi Arabia, bin Laden resumed work in the family business. When Iraq invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia, he implored his government not to invite in western forces. Instead, he suggested that he be allowed to form a resistance group of Afghan veterans who, he believed, could drive the Iraqis from Kuwait. After the Saudis admitted US-led coalition forces into the kingdom, he ran afoul of the Saudi government for his outspoken views against the presence of western forces in the Muslim holy land (Osama 2000, 3). He left Saudi Arabia in 1991 and the following year appeared in Khartoum, Sudan; by 1992 where he reportedly farmed and built a road from Khartoum to Port Sudan on the Red Sea (Osama 2000, 3). He also came into contact with Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi, the ideologue of the country's new Islamist regime, a regime which was closely aligned with Tehran in supporting the export of global Islamic revolution (Bodansky 1999, 32-34). Later,

in 1996, when western pressure forced him out of Sudan, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan, where the Taliban welcomed him, and where he allegedly masterminded the African embassy bombings and September 11th attacks.

Bin Laden's organization, Al-Qaida, is still not completely defined. The term "Al-Qaida," or "the base" in Arabic, may initially have been the name of a guesthouse bin Laden established for mujahideen arriving to fight in Afghanistan (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 1). The exact organization is unclear, but it does not seem to conform to a standard, hierarchical structure easily explained in a line and block chart. It is known that bin Laden's system for recruiting and then receiving inbound fighters processed as many as 20,000 mujahideen of various ideological and religious persuasions, some of them very close to his own (Bodansky 1999, 14). Many of these fighters had resisted their own governments, which they considered illegitimate and apostate (Bodansky 1999, 14). Arriving in Pakistan and Afghanistan, they found something they had never before enjoyed: freedom to discuss their Islamist views on politics and government, and a place to receive advanced training in terrorist and guerrilla operations (Bodansky 1999 19). After leaving Afghanistan in 1989, bin Laden also established a welfare organization for veterans of the Afghan war. They were soon fighting in other Islamic causes around the world. Among all his activities and extensive contacts, bin Laden had a long list of like-minded individuals and proven fighters, all committed to the same goals. After his falling out with the Saudi government, the apparatus that had served to assemble and train fighters for the struggle in Afghanistan found a new purpose: international jihad.

After the African embassy bombings first brought bin Laden into prominence the default question for reporters covering the story became: what does he want? Unlike some groups whose goals are obscured with either too many or too few words, bin Laden has been direct and to the point with the goals of al-Qaida. A February 1998 joint declaration of bin Laden and

representatives of several other groups, bin Laden identified the problems and present state of affairs in the Muslim world:

First, ... the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples [Iraq]. The Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation [against Iraq]. . . to serve the Jews' petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and the murder of Muslims there. (Usama 1998, 2)

He identified the solution to these problems:

Kill America and their allies--civilians and military . . . in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. . . kill Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever you find it. . . launch the raid on Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them. (Usama 1998, 2)

In a later interview, he stated that

If their economy is destroyed they will be busy with their own affairs rather than enslaving the weak peoples. It is very important to concentrate on hitting the US economy through all possible means. (Usama 2001, 1)

Already in 1996 he had issued a public Declaration of War against the United States, and in 1997 had stated in an interview that "if someone can kill an American soldier, it is better than wasting time on other matters" (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 3). Another goal and part of his solution to the Islamic world's problems is the removal of Arab regimes friendly with the United States (Mujahid 1996, 3). The last point, though less emphasized in statements reviewed by this author, is an area of considerable debate. The question is whether bin Laden's and his allies' primary goal is ejecting the US from the region, or whether it is to remove the unfriendly (to the Islamists) regimes they feel the US is supporting. The argument seems academic, however, as each goal would seem to further the accomplishment of the other. In addition to overthrowing what al-Qaida views as corrupt regimes, another goal is to "unite all Muslims and establish a government



which follows the rule of the Caliphs (the original successors to the Prophet Muhammad) (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 3). In line with many other Islamists who grew frustrated at attempts to reform their countries within the political system, bin Laden believes the only way to establish this Caliphate is by force (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 3).

To achieve the goals of driving the United States out of the region and removing many of the current regimes, bin Laden turned to an instrument fashioned to drive out another foreign power: his now unemployed mujahideen from the Afghan War. The al-Qaida of today was probably established in 1988 and envisioned as a mechanism for supporting opposition groups throughout the Islamic world (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 2). Possibly headquartered in Sudan in the early 1990s, it eventually found its way back to Afghanistan where its members could meet and train, then proceed not only with planning future operations but continue training still more mujahideen. In the 1980s most fighters going through the Pakistani and Afghan training camps had been destined to fight the Soviets. Now, however, they would train for the fight in their respective countries, and the twelve reported camps in Afghanistan had but one purpose: export of jihad internationally (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 1). One report estimates five thousand militants have been trained in these camps, supporting cells in fifty countries (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 1). If a training manual seized by British police is any indication, trainees receive not only a heavy dose of Islamist indoctrination, but also training in weapons, explosives, and terrorist operations, as well as clandestine communications and infrastructure development. The latter involves procurement and use of false documents, operational security, resisting interrogation, and intelligence collection, to include recruiting their own assets (Al-Qaida Manual n.d., Chapter 12). According to a former al-Qaida member, the organization also received specialized training from the Iranian government (Caruso 2001, 3). Graduates would then return either to their own country or sometimes third countries where they may have engaged in ongoing conflicts such as those in Algeria, Bosnia (in the early nineties), Chechnya, and the Philippines,

or “go to ground” to act as sleeper agents for future operations. Students with extra talent and promise might be selected for more sensitive and complex missions. The September 11th hijackers, some of whom posed as students studying in Germany, fell into this category. Cells of these graduates presumably hide throughout the world, not only in Muslim countries, but also in Europe and the United States as well.

Organizationally, it is unclear to what degree anyone in al-Qaida exercises command and control of these cells. It is also unclear whether operations require or have ever required sanction from “the top,” or whether jihad operators were free to engage targets of their choosing. Statements attributed to bin Laden both before and during the US-led strike against Taliban Afghanistan indicate that, with the loss of their safe-haven and probably their command and control apparatus, individual cells were encouraged to engage in operations of their choosing. Also unclear is the amount of support various cells of activists receive from al-Qaida’s reportedly deep coffers. Some suggest al-Qaida operatives are self-sufficient, even to the point of staging robberies to finance their operations (Press Briefing 2002, 1). The September 11th hijackers actions indicate, however, that extra special operations may receive organizational funding and other support from al-Qaida. Evidence suggests that al-Qaida may not have deep pockets, but it does have at least indirect access to considerable funds.

Logistically, al-Qaida has never suffered the deprivations of other struggling militant groups. With bin Laden as a charter member, the organization had both a wealthy benefactor and one who knew how to enhance existing wealth; indeed, financial stability may be an organizational strength. With an estimated \$300 million dollars to his name, bin Laden and al-Qaida have the sufficient resources to conduct future operations (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 2). s attractive a target as his bank accounts initially appears, he seems to have successfully hidden and laundered large amounts in accounts under false names in Europe (Baldauf 1998, 1). He has also used various Islamic charitable and cultural organizations throughout the world for

the same purposes (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 1). All in all, bin Laden has shown himself to be not only rich, but also extremely adept at managing his financial resources, resources made more significant since, compared to conventional militaries buying tanks and planes, terrorism is “war on the cheap.”

In order to achieve its ends, al-Qaida has resorted to terrorist attacks. The most spectacular to date has been the September 11th attacks against the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. Previously, al-Qaida had launched simultaneous bombings against US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The most recent attack may have been the tourist bombing in Bali and the assault on a French ship near Yemen, but bin Laden’s anti-US operations go back to the US intervention in Somalia in the early nineties. Claiming his forces engaged American peacekeepers in Somalia, he stated, “We used to hunt them [American military personnel] down in Mogadishu” (al-Qaida [the Base] n.d., 2). Some accounts even have him taking credit for orchestrating the battle in Mogadishu in which eighteen American service members were killed (Bodansky 1999 82). Al-Qaida is linked to the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, as well as to bombings in Riyadh in 1995, Dhahran in 1996, and an attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995 (Al-Qaida, Special Section n.d., 3). Al-Qaida was also linked to the attack on the USS Cole less than a year before the September 11th attacks, and may have been connected to the recent assassination of a US diplomat in Jordan.

All of these attacks seem to support al-Qaida’s goal of getting the United States out of the Middle East. Possibly the attackers look back fifty years to Great Britain’s rapid decision to withdraw from Palestine following the bombing of the King David Hotel by Irgun, the Jewish terrorist group. More recent history witnessed rapid US withdrawal from Beirut following the Marine barracks bombing in 1983 and the withdrawal from Somalia in 1993 following the death of eighteen soldiers in a fire fight, so precedents certainly exist. However, while these anti-US actions may support bin Laden’s goal of driving the US out of Muslim lands, they do not

necessarily support the less frequently stated goal of overthrowing despised local regimes. It may be that bin Laden wants the US to put such pressure on friendly Arab regimes that they, in turn, put unbearable pressure on their possibly rebellious populations. If these actions are the extent of his plan to overthrow local governments, they seem insufficient. The question then arises over whether al-Qaida's goal is simply the removal of the US from the region or whether the objective extends to both US removal and regime change in the Muslim, specifically Arab world. The first goal might appear achievable--in light of recent history--simply by undertaking a terrorist campaign. The latter, however, would require an effort corresponding more to an insurgency. The answer to whether his movement is just terrorism or whether it is an insurgency is critical because the nature of the movement may determine not just the full extent of that threat, but also how the US should best deal with the threat.

In defining the threat, doctrinal definitions are a point of departure. Terrorism is

The calculated use or threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-154),

and a (traditional) insurgency is

an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-83)

Although not part of the above definitions, an important subtlety associated with terrorism is choice of targets. A common perception is that terrorist attacks strike innocent victims as opposed to soldiers that may even appear to be more legitimate, albeit less sensational targets. The official definition begs the fact that terrorism may very well be one of many tools in the arsenal of an insurgent. An example might be the murder of a government official by insurgents to coerce the local community against participating in government programs. Utilizing the terror tool does not, however, make the insurgents just terrorists who resort only to violence to achieve their end.

Most successful insurgents in the last fifty years have done something that the terrorists during the same time frame have not: developed and organized a political movement to facilitate

the attainment of ends. The linkage between means and ends separates insurgents who desire a change in government and take measured concrete steps to achieve that change from mere terrorists who have similar desires but do little more than stage dramatic attacks. One of the lessons of the last half century of guerrilla warfare, according to observer Gerard Chaliand, is that “the most important element of an [insurgency] is the underground political infrastructure” (Chaliand 1982, 10). Successful insurgencies in the last fifty years have built robust, grass-roots level political organizations. In most cases, insurgents developed these organizations well before commencing military actions. Such political organizations serve many purposes. They help tell and sell the insurgents’ story to the people, as well as sensitize the insurgents to the real needs of the people on whose behalf they supposedly fight (Paret 1986, 851). They recruit and screen new members. They eventually establish parallel insurgent governments that enhance insurgent legitimacy at the expense of the government’s legitimacy. They support insurgent military operations when the time is right to launch them, and finally organizations combine political, social, and military actions into a coordinated anti-government campaign.

Virtually all successful insurgent movements in the last fifty years have had a robust political apparatus. Those who have not have resorted to the *foco* model. According to this model, the guerrilla force forms a nucleus that precedes the development of the political organization (Johnson 1973, 90). This theory evolved to advance revolutions where mass support did not yet exist (although gaining mass support is the main reason other groups organized politically in the first place) and where insurgents hoped to achieve one of three effects that would mobilize the people and accelerate the downfall of a government. These effects included intervention by oppressive foreign forces; intervention by friendly forces; and intervention by the people of the country themselves who “are mobilized themselves by examples of the guerrillas heroism” (Johnson 1973, 89). However, each time this model failed during application, with the most

notorious failure being that of Che Guevarra and his attempt to incite the people of Bolivia to insurrection.

Reference to political organization is only one litmus test for intent. Avowed intent is another. Insurgent groups, in their writings and declarations, in the last fifty years have left little doubt that their goal was the change or eventual overthrow of the existing governmental order. To some extent most movements also had a plan for what their countries should look like after “they had thrown the current bums out.” In contrast, terrorist groups over the same period seemed content to do little more than pontificate on the evils of the political system. When they did talk about replacing their respective governments, the discussion was often only in general terms because there were no specific plans beyond the next attack. While simplistic, this assessment generally reflects the actions not only of terrorist groups but also of the *foco* guerrillas, who were arguably little different from terrorist groups in their actions.

When one applies these two tests to al-Qaida, it more closely resembles a terrorist organization. Or, if al-Qaida is an insurgency, it is one that more closely resembles the *foco* model than one relying on mass popular support. It just may be that enough latent anti-Americanism exists for al-Qaida simply to accept it as “a given.” In its statements and declarations, al-Qaida focuses far more on throwing the US and western forces out of the Muslim world than overthrowing governments. In some statements bin Laden even seems to hold out hope that these governments will repent of their pro-western ways, return to the fold of “true Islam,” thus obviating the need to overthrow regimes (Mujahid 1996, 4). In these same statements he goes on to say he has little hope that current governments will change to his liking, but says little about anti-government movements. Even some of the groups with which bin Laden has aligned himself may place less current emphasis on overthrowing their governments. Although the lack of emphasis may be more the result of efficient Egyptian internal security services, Egyptian groups no longer target tourists.

More important than statements of intent is the state of political organization. Nothing indicates al-Qaida has done the slightest bit of political organizing. While bin Laden has apparently built a robust financial and operational support infrastructure, there is little evidence of an al-Qaida-inspired movement to mobilize the people in any Arab country. The closest entities resembling such infrastructure are the numerous Islamic charities. These charities provide many social services that the governments provide inadequately, if at all. Therefore, the charities are tolerated by the government. Meanwhile, charities can be used to diminish the government's legitimacy. The subtle message that "we the insurgents are providing for you while that uncaring, illegitimate government is not" could be an easy sell, especially to people whose governments are frequently seen as doing little for them. Islamic charities could easily achieve this effect, but there is no indication they are being deliberately used this way by al-Qaida or any of its allied organizations such as the Egyptian groups. The only suspected use bin Laden has put to charities is as means to move and launder money and as clandestine support apparatus for al-Qaida operatives on a mission (Burrows 2002, 1).

Lacking a strongly stated intent for regime overthrow and lacking political organization, al-Qaida for the time being should be considered a terrorist organization, seeking to achieve its goals solely through the use of violence. Little comfort can be taken from this conclusion, however, because the level of discontent in the Arab world today and the presence of an alternative ideology--political Islam--indicate the region is ripe for an insurgency. Bin Laden and al-Qaida may not have laid the organizational groundwork that has led to success in so many other modern insurgencies, but that may not matter. The situation is sufficiently volatile that the Middle East could see the first successful employment of the *foco* model, according to which a small cadre stirs the masses into action.

Beyond the overthrow of home governments lies the concept of a "global insurgency." Poorly defined, it could take the form of a series of national insurgencies, each seeking to topple

its own government, while cooperating and sharing common ideologies and goals, and closely resembling the world communist movement throughout the Cold War. More bothersome for the United States, this all-embracing concept could also take the form of a transnational movement seeking to weaken the perceived global hegemon by conducting both terrorist strikes against its interests and simultaneously using al-Qaida-friendly governments to isolate the US in portions of the international community. Even if not a serious threat, the challenge could be a very costly nuisance.

As a terrorist group seeking foremost to throw the United States out of the Middle East, al-Qaida can probably be expected to continue conducting operations the same way it has to date. Compartmented underground cells will continue to conduct thorough planning for future operations, taking opportunities as they arise. The organization will undoubtedly try to relocate to another safe haven where it can train new members, plan complex operations, and experiment with potential weapons, just as they did with chemical laboratories in Afghanistan. The two remaining “Axis of Evil” states are possible candidates for new al-Qaida bases. It is probable that being the enemy of bin Laden’s enemy is sufficient to overcome ideological differences, at least for the present. Beyond these two countries, al-Qaida facilities could quite likely turn up in certain African countries that are rapidly evolving into failed states or in other countries where strong non-governmental forces control large sections of the country. Al-Qaida can be expected to pursue its predilection for attacking highly symbolic targets, both government and cultural centers inside the United States, and objectives like its embassies, ships, and other high profile institutions, including the American University of pick-a-country. Given the fact that most al-Qaida operatives seem to die during an operation and that many operatives are billed from the start as performing “martyrdom,” effectively suicide operations, any hostages are unlikely to live.

Perhaps most ominously, however, is bin Laden’s stated belief that to strike economically is to hurt the United States. The World Trade Center attack was arguably not only a symbolic



target, but an economic one as well. Considering the dire economic predictions following the attack, the target appears to have been well chosen. What bin Laden and his al-Qaida brothers surely learned from that attack is that a far more robust attack will be required to cause significant pain to the American economy. For this reason, as well as for the terror shock effect, al-Qaida will continue its pursuit of an effective weapon of mass destruction, and could probably be expected to employ such weapons against the capital of the American economy, New York, or major overseas symbols of American economic strength, with targets such as oil companies at far greater risk than McDonalds. Although al-Qaida may not have organized a political infrastructure, its own operational and support infrastructure seem sufficiently sound. Coupled with adequate financial resources, the organization will surely survive repeated blows to strike again before it is destroyed.

Al-Qaida's nature poses a special challenge to US Special Forces. Bin Laden's heirs can wreak havoc on important parts of the world where US presence is resident and high-profile. Further, al-Qaida's chameleon-like structure presents a very difficult target to strike or eliminate. Meanwhile, the various environments in which al-Qaida is likely to operate place a premium on situational awareness and sensitivity.



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